



# Knight Letter

THE LEWIS CARROLL SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA NUMBER 38 SUMMER 1991

## Eva Le Gallienne, Stager of Alice, Dies at 92

Eva Le Gallienne, who brought *Alice in Wonderland* to Broadway in three different decades, died on June 3 in her home in Weston, Connecticut. She was 92. Her theatrical career spanned eight decades, and she always had a soft spot in her heart for *Alice*.

Eva Le Gallienne was born in London on January 11, 1899, the daughter of poet Richard Le Gallienne and Danish-born writer Julie Norregard Le Gallienne. Most of Eva's early years were spent in France and Denmark, where she became steeped in European culture and dreamed of one day becoming an actress. She had not long to wait for that dream to come true,

for she made her stage debut in 1915 at the age of 16 in a production of *Laughter and Fools*. Coincidentally, this debut came on the stage of the Prince of Wales's Theatre in London—the same theatre which saw the West End debut of Henry Savile-Clarke's *Alice in Wonderland* in 1886.

The following year, Le Gallienne travelled to America where two years in Ethel Barrymore's company helped to establish her as a New York actress. An engagement in Molnar's *The Swan* earned her high praise from critics, and during the two-year run of that play she began to conceive the idea which would blossom into the Civic Repertory Theatre. At

that time, there were no repertory theatres in New York, nor were there any establishments such as Eva had known as a child in Europe, which provided productions of important dramas for a modest price.

Though she was discouraged by New York managers who believed that such a project would not survive in the highly competitive world of New York theatre, Eva Le Gallienne left the lights of Broadway and, on October 26, 1926, years before anyone had spoken the word "Off-Broadway," opened the renovated Fourteenth Street Theatre as the home of the newly formed Civic Repertory Theatre.



Eva Le Gallienne and Josephine Hutchinson  
in the 1932 *Alice in Wonderland*

The first week saw four plays presented in repertory, and over the next seven years, the Civic Repertory Theatre presented thirty-four plays by Ibsen, Molière, Shakespeare, and others, at prices ranging from 50¢ to \$1.50. In order to keep the price of tickets this low, Le Gallienne recruited patrons who subsidized the theatre in the amount of \$100,000 per year.

As the 20s gave way to the 30s and the depression deepened, Le Gallienne decided to add an adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* to the Civic's repertory. The company had been closed for several months in 1932 while Le Gallienne recovered from a serious hand injury, but, as she looked towards an October reopening, her mind turned to *Alice*.

"I had worked for over a year on the problem of translating the immortal *Alice* to the stage," wrote Le Gallienne. "I had visions of the irate lovers of Lewis Carroll's masterpiece turning on me and tearing me limb from limb in blind rage, accusing me of desecrating their sacred heritage. I decided to base our production on my firm conviction that *Alice in Wonderland* is by no means primarily for children. I am indeed inclined to believe the opposite to be true.

"In the text that [Florida] Frieбус and I eventually evolved there was not one word  
(continued on page 2)

## Fall Meeting to Highlight Collections

The Fall 1991 meeting of the LCSNA will be held on Sat., Oct. 5, in and around Silver Spring, Maryland. In order to allow for a full day of activities, we will convene at 10:30 am at the Wheaton Library in Silver Spring. The meeting there will include brief presentations by our three collector/hosts as well as talks by British collector and Carroll expert Selwyn Goodacre and author of the recent Carroll *National Geographic* article Cathy Newman.

We will then adjourn to the home of founding members David and Maxine Schaefer where lunch will be provided and we will have a chance to peruse the first collection of the day.

The next stop will be the home of Mr. & Mrs. August Imholtz, also long-time collectors of Carroll material. The meeting will conclude with a trip to the home Alan and Alison Tannenbaum. Dinner will be provided while we view the third Carroll collection of the day.

Book collectors come prepared to be envious, and everyone come prepared for a full day of Carroll-ing. Watch your mailbox for further details.

## Editorial— *Ubiquitous Alice*

Going to New England in June was not meant to be an escape from Alice, but it was the first time in years we have taken a vacation that included no Lewis Carroll Society meetings or pilgrimages to places made famous by Dodgson and his muse. She is inescapable, though, as we might well have known and were happy to find out.

The second day of our journey found us in Kingston, New York, where we wheeled the car around in heavy traffic to make a stop at "Alice in Videoland." Some days later the rather perplexed proprietor of "Dolls in Wonderland" in northern Massachusetts agreed to give us a business card.

A quick trip into New York City for a day of the American Booksellers Association convention brought us to the vast Javits Center where we knew only *new* booksellers would flock—not our antiquarian colleagues. An hour after our arrival, as we scanned next fall's releases in the world of children's books, we were proved wrong.

"Aren't you the Lewis Carroll people?"

It was Lois Harvey of Denver, Colorado—like us, a used book dealer intrigued by the mere thought of attending ABA. In southern New Hampshire we had a similar experience as we were checking out of a used book shop—

"Lovett & Lovett? You're the *Alice in Wonderland* people, right?"

Caught again! This time due to an article in a hometown magazine that had been mailed to the dealer by a mutual friend. If Alice could find us this far away from home, we might as well continue to pursue her. The rest of our trip brought visits with LCSNA members Rosella Howe (many wonderful hours around the kitchen table discussing Carroll) and Stan Marx (who had found a wonderful item for our collection). To top it all off, on our way south we spent a day visiting the Parrish Collection at Princeton—enough to humble any Carroll collector.

Thanks for a great trip, Alice; it's good to know you're out there.

## Le Gallienne (continued from page 1)

that was not Carroll. For practical purposes some of the incidents were changed in sequence, but in sequence only.

"I felt that two things were of paramount importance: first, the visual aspect of the production; secondly, the dream quality, which could be established only by continuous action, with Alice never leaving the stage."

Le Gallienne addressed the first of these problems by designing the production after Tenniel's drawings for the *Alice* books. "The entire production, down to the smallest prop, was to be a faithful reproduction of Tenniel's famous illustrations."

To achieve the dream quality of the performance, Le Gallienne "evolved a scheme through which it was possible to make the action continuous by the use of a track laid horizontally across the stage upon which two medium-sized chariot platforms alternately rode, shuttle-wise, varied occasionally by the use of the full stage without platform, and backed by a roll of scenery that could be kept in constant motion at varying speeds. Instead of Alice's having to leave the stage and go from one environment to another, she remained upon the stage and the various environments came to her and surrounded her." Thus in 1932 did Le Gallienne use staging techniques that would dominate American musical theatre over five decades later.

The long, complicated rehearsals for *Alice in Wonderland* were often attended by Clemence Dane, a playwright who introduced Le Gallienne to Richard Addinsell who eventually wrote a musical score for the *Alice* production.

Not only human beings but also puppets were used in *Alice*. In trying to solve the problem of representing the oysters Le Gallienne "hit on a scheme of using super-marionettes for the Walrus and the Carpenter. These huge figures were over seven feet tall. The little oyster-puppets stood just about one foot high in their Tenniel boots."

Largely because of the patience and persistence of Le Gallienne and the superb cast and crew she had assembled, the pieces of the *Alice* production began to fall into place. The lavish sets and costumes gave the show a dreadfully high price tag—over \$23,000 before opening night—but, "through the energy and stick-to-itiveness of [fund-raiser] Mary Benson, who practically held up various still-wealthy patrons at the point of a gun" the production opened in early December of 1932, just months after Alice Hargreaves' memorable visit to New York. The play, which combined both *Alice* books, starred Josephine Hutchinson as Alice, and Le Gallienne not only directed but also played the role of The White Queen. The cast also included a young Burgess Meredith in several roles, including the Dormouse.

*Alice in Wonderland* was hailed by the critics as another triumph for the Civic Repertory Theatre. Brooks Atkinson wrote of the production that it "recaptures more of the innocent nonsense of the book than you would think possible. Inasmuch as the Oxford don wrote it for saucer-eyed reading rather than acting, do not fault the collaborators if they have not turned it precisely into a play. Rather have they related it in a frankly make-believe pageant of Tenniel

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# OF BOOKS & THINGS



## New Edition of *Sylvie & Bruno* Publicity Contest to Be Judged by LCSNA

Mercury House of San Francisco will be publishing a new edition of *Sylvie and Bruno* this October. The single volume will include the complete text of both Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno* books as well as Carroll's introductions and a new set of illustrations by Santa Cruz artist Renée Flower. This book's publication marks the first time in several decades that the complete text of the *Sylvie & Bruno* books has been available outside an anthology.

Flower's illustrations combine modern design with a woodcut style presentation similar to that of chapbooks being published during Carroll's own childhood. The intentionally primitive quality of her illustrations is reminiscent of African ritual masks and the dual nature of the book's characters is emphasized by the stark black and white division of their faces.

The book includes an "Editor's Note" by Thomas Christensen which makes a strong case for *Sylvie and Bruno* as a novel of literary invention. Christensen maintains that *Sylvie and Bruno* did to the Victorian novel what *Alice in Wonderland* did to the children's book—turned it on its head—and that it relates to Carroll's earlier works as *Ulysses* relates to the more mainstream works of Joyce. Christensen finds Carroll's philosophizing off-putting, and this is unfortunate, for in his digressions from the story one can glean a great deal about Carroll's ideas on religion, politics, and other issues. Readers familiar with Carroll's life will come away from the experience of reading *Sylvie and Bruno* knowing more about both book and author.

To help promote the book, Mercury House is sponsoring a "Sylvie and Bruno Contest" in which contestants will be asked to compose a verse in the style of the "Mad Gardener's Song." Prizes, in the form of Lewis Carroll books, will be awarded in three age groups: 12 and under, 13-18, and adult. The



Illustration by Renée Flower

contest will be judged by members of the LCSNA. Anyone interested in assisting with the judging, please contact the KL editor (I can use all the help I can get). The deadline for the contest is November 29, 1991, and winners will be announced in January, 1992.

*The Complete Sylvie and Bruno* (Cloth, 384pp., \$30.00) will be available from the publisher (201 Filbert Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA, 94133) in October.

## National Geographic Features Article on Lewis Carroll

One of the goals of the LCSNA is "to advance the public knowledge and appreciation of the works of Lewis Carroll." Certainly the publication of "The Wonderland of Lewis Carroll" in the June 1991 issue of *National Geographic* will greatly advance such public knowledge. The article, written by Cathy Newman, gives a general overview of Carroll's life and works.

Newman's style of writing captures the spirit of Carroll wonderfully as she relates her travels across England in search of the don. As always in such short pieces, certain things are glossed over, but one does wish that rather than spend time telling us that the Cheshire Area Cat Championship is held in Wales, Newman had chosen to say something about Carroll's Russian journey other than "[he] spent his time viewing cathedrals." Nonetheless, she touches on most of the major aspects of Carroll's life, stopping to talk with Morton Cohen about the relationship between Carroll and Alice along the way. For the uninitiated, Newman provides a basis of knowledge of Carroll as someone other than just the author of *Alice*.

When one thinks of *National Geographic* one generally thinks of pictures, but the photographs for this article, by Sam Abell, are a bit disappointing. While the view of the Christ Church Sub-librarian's window is lovely and the reproductions of sketches and other pieces from that library's collection are tantalizing, many of the pictures leave one wondering. Why, for instance, are we shown a current Rugby student studying instead of a picture of Rugby in Carroll's time? Why does the caption for the photo of Christ Church's Hall not mention Dean Liddell's portrait in the corner or Carroll's over the photographer's right shoulder? Why was the photo of a little girl passing through a green door into a garden taken in Wales and not at the door which passes from the Deanery garden to that of Christ Church Cathedral? And why, oh why, does the plot summary of the *Alice* books contain rather childish illustrations by William Bond rather than the original Tenniel illustrations (even if they had to be adapted)?

Despite these shortcomings, this article must be considered a major event in the Carroll world for it will bring the story of Lewis Carroll to thousands who have never heard it before.

## LE GALLIENNE (continued from page 2)

scenes and Tenniel costumes to the wood notes of Richard Addinsell. No doubt the children will love it if their imaginations are still unfettered. But it is certain that their elders will love it with a nostalgic rapture for the days that no longer come."

The popularity of *Alice* was so great that Columbia Pictures expressed interest in adapting it to the screen. Contracts had been drawn up and were awaiting signatures when Paramount announced plans for its film of *Alice* and the Columbia project was scrapped. Members of the Paramount staff attended many performances of the Civic's *Alice* and Le Gallienne was amused to find a message from the film company one day asking for John Tenniel's phone number!

In spite of the success of *Alice*, the Civic was strapped for funds at the close of 1932. As the depression deepened, the private endowment which had kept the theatre alive began to disappear. Although attendance had been higher than ever in 1932, the company was in serious financial trouble. Clearly, if the Civic was to survive, something had to be done.

Le Gallienne had often turned down offers to move her successful productions uptown to Broadway, feeling that this would be inconsistent with the company's goal of fine theatre at low prices. Now, however, she had little choice. *Alice in Wonderland* was regarded as a "hit," so, in order to generate the cash so desperately needed to keep her theatre alive, Le Gallienne decided to transfer *Alice* to Broadway, where higher ticket prices might produce a profit at the box office. In January, 1933, the Civic suspended its repertory in order to move *Alice* to the New Amsterdam Theatre.

Brooks Atkinson again wrote a favorable review of the production, pleading with his readers to support it for the sake of the future of the Civic Repertory Theatre. Sadly, the move to Broadway did not produce the desired results, and though the *Alice* production went on tour to several major cities in 1933, that tour marked the end of the Civic Repertory Theatre. Seven years after it had begun, Eva Le Gallienne's repertory theatre became another victim of the depression.

Le Gallienne continued her career as a successful actress, but after the war her mind turned again to thoughts of a repertory theatre. Together with Margaret Webster she founded the American Repertory Theatre which began producing plays at the International Theatre on Columbus Circle in 1946.

Le Gallienne had been approached several times by Rita Hassan who was interested in reviving *Alice*, and, in 1947, Le Gallienne suggested that Miss Hassan join forces with ART to produce the play. A satisfactory business arrangement was reached, and, following a search for an *Alice* which turned up Bambi Linn, rehearsals began. Hassan was anxious to have the 1932 *Alice* reproduced as closely as possible. Much of the original creative staff was assembled, and Le Gallienne repeated her role as White Queen. Among the younger members

of the cast was a white rabbit named Julie Harris who was destined for great things.

The revival of *Alice* opened at the International Theatre on April 5, 1947, later transferring to the Majestic Theatre where it ran until June 28. Again, *Alice* received generally good reviews and played to full houses. Bambi Linn was even featured on the cover of *Life* magazine. When *Alice* closed, it was reported that during no part of its run had it lost money. However, because of its initial investment and its association with the financially beleaguered American Repertory Theatre, it did not make money either.

During its run at the Majestic, the show was recorded in a hour-length album for RCA Victor. Le Gallienne wrote that "while everyone agreed on the excellence of these recordings, RCA, for some obscure reason which they alone can fathom, shrouded their existence in such profound mystery that I doubt if more than a dozen people have ever heard them."

Many more people would experience Le Gallienne's *Alice*, though. On October 23, 1955, her adaptation was transferred to another medium—television. *Alice in Wonderland* was the

first presentation of the Hallmark Hall of Fame, a series which continues to present television specials to this day. Le Gallienne again played the role of the White Queen.

On December 23, 1982, Le Gallienne's *Alice* made

a 50th anniversary appearance on Broadway, this time at the Virginia Theatre. This lavishly mounted production was directed by Le Gallienne, who recreated her White Queen for a final time. Bambi Linn assisted with movement in the new production. Unfortunately, the adaptation which had seemed so fresh in 1932 failed to charm critics 50 years later. Though praised for its costumes and sets, once again designed after Tenniel, the production was generally criticized by reviewers as having no real spark in it.

Nonetheless, *Alice* again made the transition from stage to television, this time as part of Public Television's Great Performances series. WNET-TV, one of the New York area's public television stations, had been a major investor in the show, and, though the play had only a brief run, the station was eventually able to raise enough money to make *Alice* into a television presentation. The TV *Alice* aired on October 3, 1983, and featured much of the Broadway cast, including Kate Burton as Alice, as well as a few added stars, such as Kate's father Richard, James Coco, and Colleen Dewhurst.

Through its three Broadway presentations, two television adaptations, and countless regional and amateur productions, Eva Le Gallienne's *Alice in Wonderland* has been seen by hundreds of thousands of Americans. The script has been kept almost constantly in print and available to amateurs by Samuel French since that company first published it in the 1930s.

On the occasion of the 1982 Broadway revival of her *Alice* Eva Le Gallienne was presented a certificate of appreciation by the LCSNA and made an honorary member of the Society.

*The children will love it if their imaginations are still unfettered . . . it is certain that their elders will love it with a nostalgic rapture for the days that no longer come.*

—Brooks Atkinson





# Carrollian Notes

## Carroll Letters Bring Record Prices

A collection of twenty-nine letters from Lewis Carroll to Agnes Hull (all of which had been published) sold at Christie's in London on June 26 for £126,500 (\$206,000). Both the seller and the buyer were anonymous. The letters include some marvelous examples of Carroll's talent, including mirror writing and circular writing. Though the estimate of £20,000–£30,000 was probably well below the fair value of this remarkable collection, this stunning price is unprecedented for Carroll letters. Bidding progressed rapidly to £55,000 and even more rapidly after that as two bidders competed for the prize. The final price was impressive enough to be picked up by the news wires, and reports of the sale appeared in papers in France, the United States, and elsewhere. In a July 30 sale at a Massachusetts auction house, a copy of *The Hunting of the Snark* in a presentation binding inscribed "J. W. B. from C.L.D. a token of friendship and regard. Ap. 4, 1876" sold for \$5720.

## Tenniel Biography Published

*Sir John Tenniel Alice's White Knight*, a full scale biography of John Tenniel, has just been published by Scholar Press (Old Post Road, Brookfield, VT, 05036). The book sells for \$75.00, but the publisher is taking pre-publication orders from LCSNA members for only \$55.00. The book is by Rodney Engen, a Victorian illustration scholar who has also written volumes on Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane, and Kate Greenaway. His Tenniel volume consists of 169 pages of text, illustrated with over 150 black and white illustrations, along with several lengthy appendices. Most useful of these

is one listing the complete published works of Tenniel, which is far more extensive than previous checklists. Engen's effort represents the first in-depth biography of the elusive illustrator who contributed so much to the *Alice* books. A lengthy chapter on the *Alice* illustrations includes reproductions of sketches by both Tenniel and Carroll. Our first impression of the book, which arrived just days before this KL went to press, is that, while still leaving many unanswered questions about Tenniel, it will prove an important reference for those interested in his life and works. A full review will follow in the next KL.

## Fifth Grade Alice

*Alice Whipple in Wonderland*, by Laurie Adams & Allison Coudert, tells the story of ten-year-old Alice Whipple, who longs to play the lead in the school play, *Alice in Wonderland*. Unblessed with the skills of a thespian, Alice is cast as a lowly oyster—if only she knew how much Lewis Carroll admired the performance of oyster Dorothy d'Alcourt in Henry Savile-Clarke's 1886 *Alice* drama! Carrollians will enjoy the fact that the authors use this set-up to teach their readers a little about Lewis Carroll and his works. Alice's teacher, for instance, explains the hatter's madness to her students: "In the 19th century when *Alice in Wonderland* was written, hatters used certain chemicals that had the unfortunate effect of poisoning them and affect-

ing their minds." Alice Whipple uses her oyster costume as a disguise to help her solve a mystery. The book is the sequel to *Alice Whipple—Fifth Grade Detective*, and is written at about fifth grade reading level. Published by Bantam-Skylark, it should be available through your local bookseller.

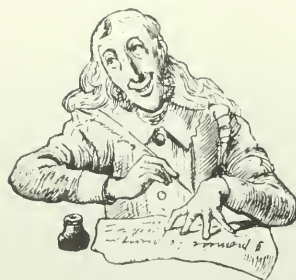
## New Golden Book *Alice*

A new "Little Golden Book" of Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* has been issued and is available at bookstores (and supermarkets) everywhere (Copyright 1991, volume number 105-77). The 24-page volume features text adapted by Teddy Slater and illustrations after the Disney movie by Franc Mateu. As usual with Disney productions, Lewis Carroll's name is not mentioned anywhere in the book. The text combines scenes from *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, and has been completely rewritten from earlier Golden Book editions. As in previous efforts, however, all of Lewis Carroll's charm is removed from the story, and whole episodes are summed up with lines such as "she had entered a strange and wondrous land . . . full of the oddest creatures she had ever seen." Characterizations, and even dialogue, are based on Disney's, not Lewis Carroll's work. When one realizes that most American children will first encounter *Alice* in an edition such as this, one wonders if future generations will ever be inspired to read the *real* book. One thing is for certain—Lewis Carroll would be horrified.

[The recent survey in the *Knight Letter* indicated that many LCSNA members are book collectors with an interest in the details of Carroll bibliography. In this new column we hope to offer previously unpublished bibliographical tidbits. We invite contributions from all members.]

The 1932 first American edition of *Alice's Adventures Underground* is famous for misstating, both on the dust jacket and in the book, the date of publication of the first edition. The actual date of the original was 1886, but the American *Underground* states that it was printed in 1876 and 1886. We recently acquired a copy of the American *Underground*, presumably a later issue, in which this mistake had been corrected. Unfortunately, our copy was lacking the dust jacket. Do any members know if the error on the jacket was ever corrected?

## BIBLIOGRAPHER'S C O R N E R



A staged version of Mike Batt's *The Hunting of the Snark* will open on October 24 at the Prince Edward Theatre in London's West End. The original studio recording of Batt's *Snark*, released in 1986, featured Roger Daltrey, Art Garfunkel, Julian Lennon, Cliff Richard, George Harrison, John Gielgud, and John Hurt. Full color advertisements in the London papers look intriguing, but do not indicate cast members. LCSNA members who will be in London in late November and wish to see the show may wish to contact the editor, who will be securing tickets.

Also in London this fall, the British Library will mount an exhibition titled "One hundred and twenty-five years of Alice" from September to December. At the September 18 opening Macmillan and Company and the Dodgson Family Estate will present the original Tenniel woodblocks for the *Alice* books to the museum.

*The New York Times Magazine* for June 2, 1991 featured a crossword puzzle titled "Wondrous Maze." Embedded in the finished puzzle is a quote from *Alice*.

"Alice in Wondertown" is a Cuban film which uses Carroll's story as the basis for scathing political satire. The Alice of the film visits a fictional town in which a spa director tries to cure the spiritual and physical defects of characters who clearly reflect the filmmaker's view of what is bad about Cuba. The film set attendance records in Cuba until it was banned four days after opening.

LCSNA member Michele Rosenberg has written a pop-up version of *Alice* which will be published by Ottenheimer Publishers of Baltimore, Maryland, in 1992. The story has been condensed into four books of approximately 180 words each which will be sold together in a slipcase. Watch future KLs for details

## Surveys! Surveys! Surveys!

**Results of the LCSNA Membership Survey will be published in the next *Knight Letter*, so please send in your completed survey if you have not already done so. If you need a survey, please contact the editor.**

Orchard House of Concord, MA, offered a special program in July for children to study local children's author Louisa May Alcott plus six others, including Lewis Carroll.

In "A Reader's Guide to the Best in Business Books," (*Lear's*, August 1991), Patricia O'Toole recommends *Alice* as a prime example of dealing with a hostile work environment.

A new theatrical version of *The Hunting of the Snark* has been produced at Amherst College and will be presented by KO Theater Work, Inc., next season. The work, created by Thom Haxo and Peter Lobdell, concerns a production of *The Hunting of the Snark* which is presented by the community theatre of Skinnersville, a fictional town inhabited by characters which are part animal and part human.

Alyson Publications (40 Plympton St., Boston, MA, 02118) has launched a new series of children's books under the title "Alyson Wonderland." The series, which is about children with gay and lesbian parents, uses a stylized Tenniel White Rabbit in its advertising.

Byron and Victoria Sewell's long awaited Korean rendition of *Alice in Wonderland* has been published by Sharing-Place of Seoul, Korea. *Alice's* adventures are relocated and revised to use the Korean cultural idiom. The book includes not only the Korean text but also an English retranslation as well as illustrations in the Korean style.

*Adventures in Musicland* is a computer program for the Macintosh family of computers. Based on *Alice*, the software is a collection of four musical games and puzzles for children. Available from: Dr. T's Music Software, 100 Crescent Road, Needham, MA, 02194.

Lewis Carroll makes an appearance in Julian Rios' novel *Larva* (Dalkey Archive, 1991, \$27.50). The main action describes a phantasmagoric party held in London on a midsummer night. Among the masked guests are Don Juan, figures from *The Arabian Nights*, and everyone's favorite don.

Prices for animation cels continue to rise across the board with a cel of "Alice Amidst the Talking Flowers" from Disney's 1951 *Alice* film bringing \$79,200 at Christie's, New York, at a June sale.

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